February 23, 1973

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Dear Mike,

I'm sorry for the delay in answering your last letter but things have been quite hectic here the last few weeks. The Government's decision to eliminate the NIH Training Programs has had considerable impact on the Medical School and our Department. We have been agonising about finding ways and means to continue supporting our existing and prospective graduate students. In some way we must find about $100,000 to pick up that loss. And doing that in the present climate of retrenchment and disaffection of basic research shall not be easy.

Progress in the lab has also been slower than usual. [redacted] has been ill and out of the lab for weeks at a time. [redacted] But we have finally completed the analysis of seven of the ST01 clones and they each fall within the range of values we found previously, i.e., between 0.2 to 0.5 viral genome equivalents per cell. So I don't think we ever had a mixed population of cells without viral DNA and some containing multiple equivalents. ST-4 also contained 0.3 but ST-6 (our batch of cells; the ones you sent had thawed completely by the time they arrived (I think the container was too small as there was no trace of any CO_2)) was not significantly different from BHK. AT2, a transformed BHK line you sent us a long time ago and which we only just analyzed, contained 1.2 equivalents per cell.

As for a new ST series, it certainly seems like a worthwhile thing to look at but at the moment we're a bit up to our ears in other things. Wouldn't it be logical to check any new "ST" isolates for Tag and TSTA first and then if they look "curious" we would certainly check them for PY DNA sequences.

There's been no word from H. Smith although she told me she was isolating a new set of abortines. We did offer to give her some of our last batch of P^{32}-labeled defective and non-defective SV40 DNA so that she could do the annealing kinetics of those to see if their earlier results could be explained by the use of a probe which contained host sequences. But she never came round to pick it up and I've been too busy and reluctant to prod her further.

I thought the Biohazard meeting was as good as could be expected. It didn't appreciably relieve or increase any of the anxieties but perhaps it heightened the awareness that there's a problem and that some serious thinking has to be done. We hope there might be several positive steps to come out of it: A registry and perhaps a protocol for a prospective epidemiologic study of present day investigators working with different types of cell cultures and ongogenic viruses; a "Newsletter" or "Bulletin" issued periodically reporting new developments in the technology and techniques of dealing with potential biohazards; some way of doing in-depth study of any "suspicious" occurrences of tumors, infections etc. to see if any of our current detection methods can exonerate or implicate laboratory infections; the book should not only be a useful compendium of information relevant to potential biohazards but it will be an interesting source for the natural histories of many viruses.

Once again I'm looking forward to my visit at ICRF. I expect I'll be arriving on May 2nd so that I'll have a day or two to acclimate to the time change before plunging into a full and busy day on May 4. Hopefully, I'll be able to extend my stay in London to about the next mid-week (~May 9th-10th) and be able to spend a few days longer at the Fund and visiting Oxford. I'd not asked before but can my expenses for the week be taken care of by the Fund? Also has the lab made arrangements for a place for me to stay or shall I go ahead with the tentative arrangements I've already made from this end?

My best to Veronica, Renato and Maureen, Ponte, Lionel and all of the lovely ladies in the office. Marianne and Millie send their best.

Sincerely yours,

PB:af